PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

A simplified and concise guide for every design lover and wannabe

GeoAfrikana

Introduction

If it feels like your designs are always stabbing the eyes, well, you might be right. I've been there before. All big designers have, too.

One way to change that? Learning the principles of design. Particularly for people who do not have a natural sense-organ for beautiful designs, coming up with a beautiful design can be a daunting task.

So, we've put together the fundamental principles of design that graphic designers, artists, web designers, cartographers and all design related folks will need in all their designs. These are principles that have not only been tested by experts, but we have also tested ourselves, and have found useful to always keep inmind when designing anything designable.

The examples may not cover every explanation and application of each principle, but it should give you a strong idea of what each means. And it should, with practice, help you design stuff that pleases the eyes.

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Overview

One word summarizes the principles of graphic design

CRAP

C
Contrast
R
Repetition
A
Alignment
P
proximity

Contrast

#1: What is contrast?

To **emphasize** the **difference** between two or more elements in your design.

#2 How to achieve contrast

Contrast can be achieved with:

#3: How to use

Use high contrast to emphasize an element and low contrast to do the opposite.

High contrast makes this text loud

Low contrast makes this text silent

#3: Example

- Dark blue and bright orange give high contrast. They are used to divide this banner into two sections.
- The dark blue overlay on the background picture makes the white text easily readable.

#3: Final words on contrast

The highest contrast is black text on white background. However, it is the most boring design – most people, especially students, dislike it.

Repetition

#1: What is repetition?

Consistent use of styles and colours across your design.

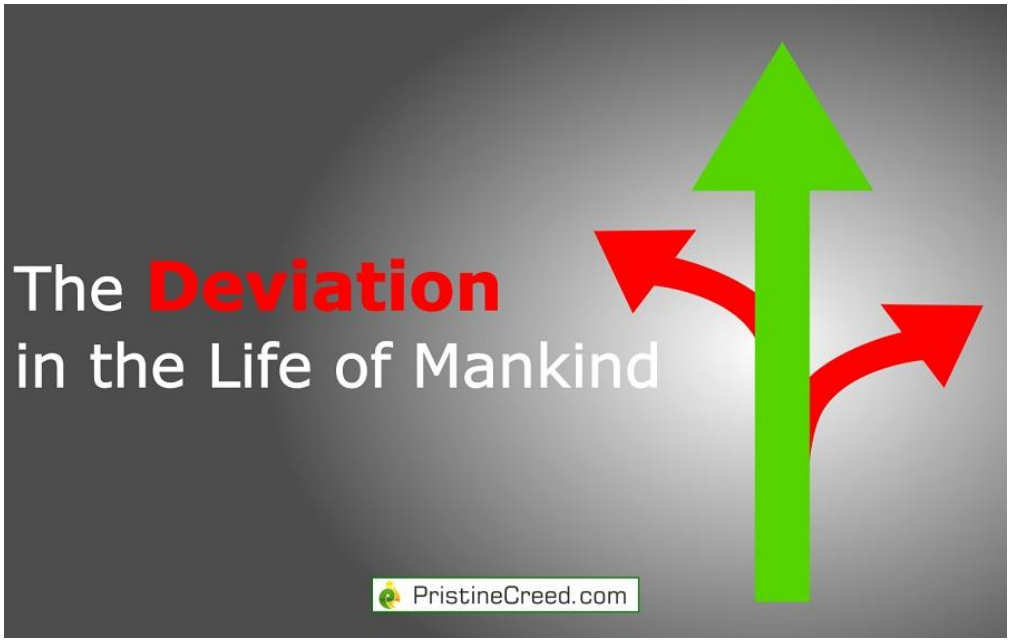
#2: How to achieve

Repeat colours, shapes, font sizes and font styles to achieve repetition.

#3: How to use

Repeat font and shape styles, sizes and colours in different sections of your design to give harmony and unity to your design.

#4: Example



Note how colour red is repeated in the text and the illustration.

#4: Final words on repetition

- Except you really know what you're doing, try to use not more than three colours and two fonts in your design.

- Black and white are neutral colours. Arial and sans serif are neutral fonts. So, you don't have to always repeat them. Also, they are not included in the three-fonts and three-colours rule.

Alignment

#1: What is alignment?

Maintaining equal spacing across your design.

#2: How to achieve

Use the gridlines, guides and align tools in your design software to align elements.

Use ***CSS*** to align webpage elements if you are a web designer.

#3: How to use

- Use alignment to show order and composure in your design.
- Make an element unaligned to make it noticeable.

#4: Example

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- Observe how the design is balanced around the horizontal and vertical gridlines.
- Also, all the social icons are equally spaced from one another.

Proximity

#1: What is proximity?

The use of space to show similarity between design elements.

#2: How to achieve

Place related objects close to each other and do the opposite for unrelated objects.

#4: Example

- Note how the designer used empty space to divide this design into four sections:
  - Title
  - Featured picture
  - Venue and date
  - Contact info

#4: Final words on proximity

Use empty space (aka whitespace) to show transition from one section to another.

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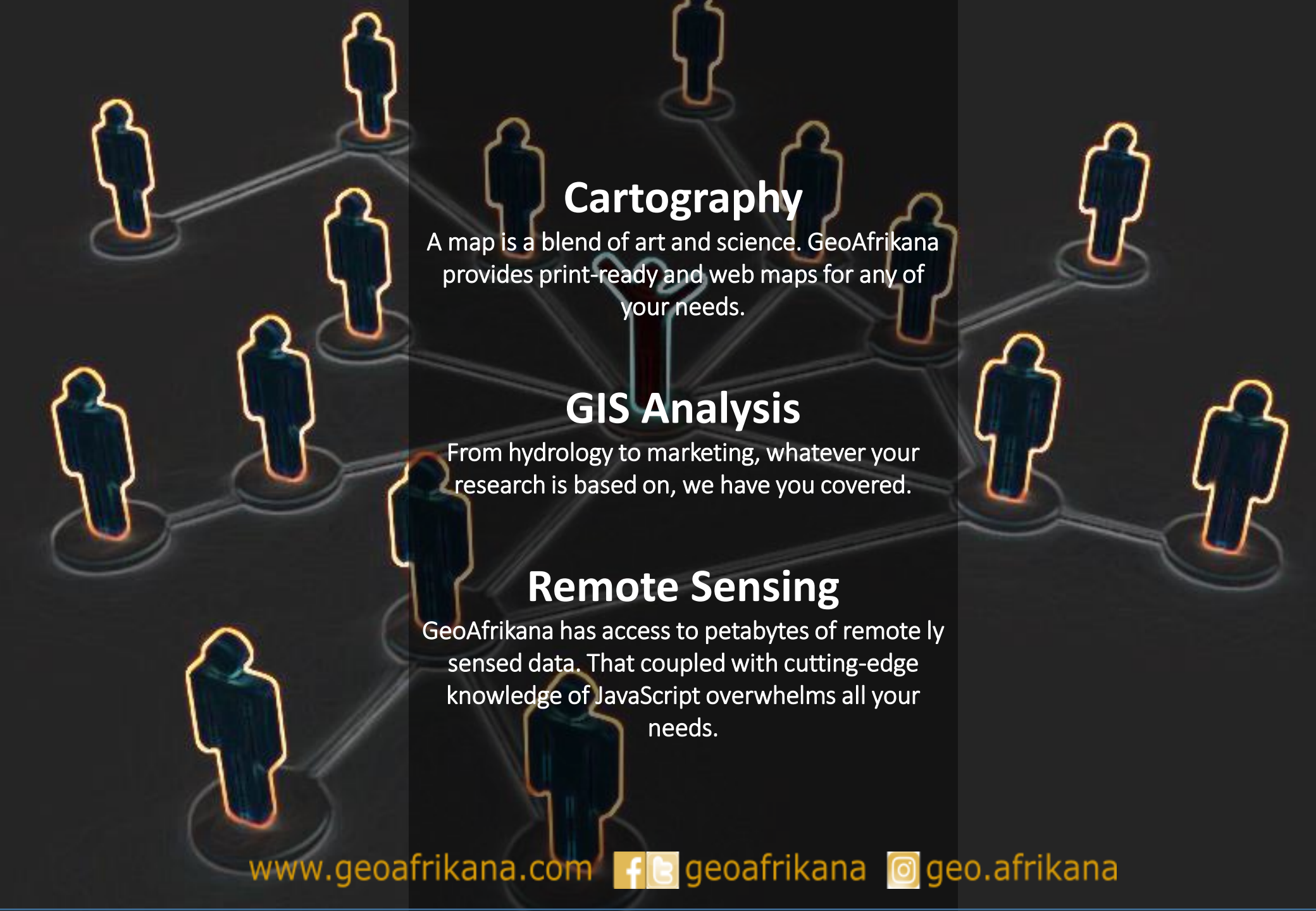

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